OSPREY RESTORATION

Osprey, commonly called the fish hawk or fish eagle, is neither a true hawk nor eagle. Ospreys are cosmopolitan and occur worldwide with the exception of Antarctica. The species is of ancient lineage and presently is classified near the kite family. There are four subspecies presently recognized, two occurring in North America, P.L. carolinenses and P.L. ridgwayi. Ridgwayi is found in the Bahamas and Caribbean, while carolinensis is the Midwestern species. Carolinensis is migratory in its northern range and resides in south Florida and possibly part of the Gulf coast and northwest Mexico.

Ospreys were never confirmed to historically nest in Iowa, but were probably here given the abundance of lakes and wetlands that dotted the prairie. Ospreys are very unwary birds and territorially appear weak. Pairs will nest colonially. Nests may be upon structure, manmade or natural, that provides a platform, but Ospreys have been known to nest on the ground. Nests are generally at least one-foot deep and four to five feet wide, are made of sticks and lined with grass. Highest productivity is attained on power poles and nesting platforms.

Ospreys were heavily affected by the biocide crash of the 1950s. Populations were severely reduced throughout the range but hardest hit in the Great Lakes and Atlantic coast. A strong fidelity to ancestral breeding areas slowed range expansion into vacant and newly created habitat since the DDT era.

With construction of lakes by Department of Natural Resources and reservoirs by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, potential osprey habitat exists that was previously not available. There are numerous osprey summer sightings in Iowa, but apparently these young, non-breeding ospreys return to northern areas for mating and nesting. Despite this population growth, ospreys have demonstrated little breeding range expansion. Minnesota and Wisconsin DNR officials suggest that ospreys, in our lifetime, do not readily pioneer new breeding ranges. Instead they experience suppressed reproduction as density of breeders increases. To address this issue, young ospreys from Wisconsin and Minnesota are being relocated to areas with suitable habitat in southern Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Ohio.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has assisted conservation partners with technical assistance, encouragement, and fish to successfully release ospreys in Iowa. The Macbride Raptor Project located near Coralville Reservoir has spearheaded this work. Beginning in 1997 four or five young ospreys have been released annually at their facility. Since that time, personnel at the Hartman Reserve Nature Center in Cedar Falls initiated a release at their facility in 1998. Staff of Boone County Conservation Board and Polk County Conservation Board coordinated a release at Saylorville Reservoir in 2000. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has provided distinguished service for releases at Coralville and Saylorville Reservoir respectively. Assisted by literally hundreds of volunteers, these conservation organizations have devoted their efforts to bring ospreys to Iowa as a nesting species. A four-year minimum

commitment of releasing ospreys is required at each site. Project fundraising is the responsibility of the conservation organizations doing the releases. Ospreys cost about $500 per bird.

In Iowa, ospreys have two bands, a silver U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band and a numbered, lavender band on separate legs. Forty-eight ospreys have been released at the three sites since 1997.

Beginning in 2000 Osprey released at Heron Lake in SW Minnesota by Minnesota DNR, built a nest atop a microwave tower near Cayler Prairie in NW Iowa. In late winter Great-horned Owls were seen at the nest and tending young, however by April the Ospreys were once again nesting at the site. Incubation appeared to be progressing, but ultimately the nesting attempt failed. It was believed extremely violent storms were a factor in the demise of the nesting attempt. A second pair was also observed nest building in the Spirit Lake area. At Coralville reservoir a 1998 released Osprey was nest building with two other unidentified adult Osprey. The adults were seen feeding the year-class of 2001.

In 2002 the Spirit Lake pair nested on a platform at the outdoor classroom area of Spirit Lake school. In early July a single egg was discovered. This is the first osprey egg documenting osprey nesting since European settlement. Also on a pole/platform near Cayler Prairie a nest was constructed at that site.

At Coralville reservoir a nest was constructed by A5 (Macbride 1998) and an unbanded female. These birds were joined by H2 (2000 Saylorville) feeding young hacked birds. Four Wisconsin osprey were placed at the site. However, two young died from heat stress prior to release.

At Saylorville a pair of wild birds E4 (Hartman 2000) and E1 (Macbride 2000) appeared at the site, causing excitement and strafing released birds. Five additional osprey were hacked from the site.

At Hartman Reserve Nature Center four additional Osprey were hacked.

This project is in keeping with the IA DNR mission to protect, propagate, increase, and preserve the wildlife of the state (Section 456A.23, Code of Iowa, 1997). Establishing as Osprey population will improve the state's wildlife diversity and increase the public's appreciation of wetland ecology. There is a goal of five nesting pairs with the potential for another five breeding pairs located the state by 2006.

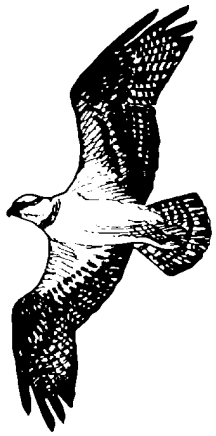

Table 13.1 Osprey releases in Iowa commencing in 1997

Year	Location	USFWS #	Color Band	Comments
1997	Macbride	60848727		
		60848728		
		60848729		
		60848730		
		60848735		
1998	Macbride	60848745	A8	
		60848746	A6	
		60848747	A5	returned to Coral ville 2001, 2002
		60848748	A7	
1998	Hartman	60848741	A1	
		60848742	A2	
		60848743	A3	
		60848744	A4	
1999	Macbride	78823203	C1	
		78823205	C3	
		78823207	C5	
		78823208	C6	
1999	Hartman	78823204	C2	
		78823206	C4	
		78823209	C7	
		78823210	C8	Died in hack box
2000	Macbride	78823212	E1	returned to Saylorville 2002
		78823217	E6	
		78823218	E7	
		78823220	E0	
2000	Hartman	78823213	E3	Fractured wing released at MRP
		78823214	E2	
		78823215	E4	
		78823216	E5	
		78823219	E8	Died in hack box
2000	Saylorville	78823221	H4	
		78823222	H2	returned to Coralville 2002
		78823223	H0	died impact
		78823224	H3	
		78823225	H1	
2001	Macbride	78823228	H6	
		78823229	H7	
		78823232	K0	
		78823234	K2	
2001	Hartman	78823227	H5	
		78823230	H8	
		78823231	H9	
		78823233	K1	
2001	Saylorville	78823235	H5	
		78823236	H8	
		78823237	H9	
		78823238	K1	
2002	Macbride	78823243	K3	
		78823245	K5	
		78823246	K6	Died heat stress
		78840802	J3	Died heat stress
		78840844		Rehabbed bird from The Raptor Cen
2002	Hartman	78823244	K4	
		78823247	K7	
		78823250	K9	
		78823248	K8	
2002	Saylorville	78823241	J4	
		78823242	J5	
		78823249	J1	
		78840801	J2	
		78840803	J0	